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How the Swedish Market for Wild Caught Fish is Shaped by Voluntary Sustainability Standards

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Abstract

This article deals with how the global northern market for wild caught fish is shaped by voluntary sustainability standards (VSS). Specifically, it investigates how different market norms introduced by both mainstream- and niche market VSS affect what market actors do in practice. Drawing on two case studies of MSC and KRAV in Sweden, we illustrate that globalisation is the main reason why mainstream market VSS is both the largest and the fastest growing category of VSS. Moreover, we also show why large market actors reap disproportionate benefits from mainstream market VSS. Finally, this paper concludes that market practice theories describing the shaping of food markets benefit from differentiating between global- and national normalizing practices.

Keywords: Voluntary sustainability standards, market practice, market-based instruments, governmentality, wild caught fish

1. Introduction

During the last decades, different international organizations, NGOs, researchers, activists and conservation groups have time and time again emphasized the overexploitation of global fish stocks and the negative marine ecosystem effects of unsustainable fishing practices (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013, Campling et al., 2012, Jacquet, 2010). However, public authority actions (e.g., global conventions and national fishing laws) devised to address these problems have repeatedly failed (ibid). As a consequence, in the global north, governance of fisheries has instead been implemented through market-based instruments, such as sustainability labels and certification systems supported by consumer demand (Potts and Haward, 2007, Ponte and Cheyns, 2013, Jacquet, 2010). When private or public organizations unforced use labels to inform consumers about the environmental aspects of products, the labels are usually referred to as *voluntary sustainability standards* (Vitalis, 2002, Jordan et al., 2003). These labels are used as standards against a certain sustainability performance can be measured (often assessed by accredited third-party certifiers), and this notion also makes VSS the norm for what is considered environmentally friendly goods (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013). Consequently, VSS can be defined as *"a set of voluntary predefined rules, procedures, and methods to systematically assess, measure, audit and/or communicate the social environmental behaviour and/or performance of firms"* (Gilbert et al., 2011, Manning et al., 2012).

In the global north, VSS have become rapidly more visible in the market for wild caught fish, and that is in spite of the relatively recent origin of sustainable fishing practices (Potts and Haward, 2007, Jacquet, 2010). An increased awareness of marine environmental problems among consumers has led to a subsequent increase in demand for sustainable wild caught fish products (Teisl et al., 2002). However, despite the increasing acceptance of VSS in the marketplace, there is much debate about whether VSS are primarily used as marketing tools by actors (e.g., retailers, producers etc.) in the value chain, or for achieving marine environmental

policy objectives (Potts and Haward, 2007, Belton et al., 2011, Hatanaka, 2010a). Ideally, VSS for wild caught fish takes into consideration the ecological integrity of the harvest and its surrounding ecosystem (IISD, 1996, Jacquet, 2010), but previous studies in the Swedish market shows that the intentions, scope and criteria of different VSS may vary considerably (Thrane et al., 2009). According to Muradian and Pelupessy (2005) and Potts et al. (2014), there are two categories of VSS: *niche market VSS* and *mainstream market VSS*. *Niche market VSS* targets niche markets by offering "rigorous" criteria that mitigates a wide range of environmental problems at a higher price premium (Muradian & Pelupessy, 2005; Potts et al., 2014). While this category offers the most stringent environmental standards, it also reaches the least amount of people due to its high price premiums (Muradian & Pelupessy, 2005; Potts et al., 2014). *Mainstream market VSS* targets broad markets by aiming for a minimum amount of environmental standards in order to uphold "competitive prices" (Muradian & Pelupessy, 2005; Potts et al., 2014). Consequently, this category has the possibility to encourage large amounts of people to purchase sustainable wild caught fish (Muradian & Pelupessy, 2005; Potts et al., 2014). However, the *mainstream market* category of VSS has been receiving vast critique. It has been accused of only mitigating the "worst" sustainability issues (Thrane et al., 2009), hence tend to "sustain the unsustainable" (Konefal and Hatanaka, 2011). Moreover, mainstream market VSS for wild caught fish have repeatedly failed to address socio-economic conditions (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013), environmental implications (e.g., emissions, harmful agents and chemicals) (Thrane et al., 2009, Jacquet, 2010), and seem to offer disproportionate commercial advantages for large actors (e.g., producers, retailers, large etc.) - seeking to "*strategically differentiate their product lines from those of their competition"* (Belton et al., 2011, Fulponi, 2006, Jacquet, 2010). Yet, despite the critique, the mainstream market category of VSS is both the largest and fastest growing - both in terms of geographic coverage and number of certified products (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013). Hence, as VSS rapidly enters the mainstream markets of wild caught fish, it is crucial to understand their governance dynamics since they shape production, trade and consumption practices throughout the entire value chain (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013, Hatanaka et al., 2005). For this paper, we are interested studying these governance dynamics, and to get a better understanding of why the mainstream category of VSS for wild caught fish is both the largest and fastest growing.

Ponte and Cheyns (2013) and Teisl et al. (2002) suggest that more research is needed on how VSS shape markets for wild caught fish. Moreover, Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) suggest that research is needed regarding how VSS as market norms affects market practices (i.e., activities that contribute to constitute markets). Hence, the aim with this paper is to investigate how different categories of VSS take part in shaping global northern markets for sustainable wild caught fish. We ask:

- *What are the differences between mainstream market VSS and niche market VSS in how they affect market practices in the Swedish market for wild caught fish?*

In order to find answers to our question, we will begin by creating a theoretical framework around previous research on mainstream- and niche market VSS for wild caught fish, and how they as market norms takes place in shaping markets. Moreover, we will also cover the different VSS for wild caught fish in Sweden. Based on the theoretical framework, we will

then conduct two case studies that allows us to analyse how both mainstream market VSS and niche market VSS affect market practices in the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish. Finally, we will present our findings, give an answer to our research question and suggest areas for further research.

2. Literature review

In this part, we will first review previous research on VSS as market based instruments and the differences between mainstream market VSS and niche market VSS. Secondly, we will describe the different VSS in Sweden. Finally, we will review theory on how markets are shaped and map out the conceptualization of market practice we subscribe to.

2.1 VSS as market based instruments

The literature approaches VSS from various perspectives (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013). *Institutionalist* perspectives cover issues of private authority and the legitimacy of the organisations and stakeholders that drive them (Manning et al., 2012, Riisgaard, 2009). Contributions from a *political economy* perspective focus on VSS and the relation between production and trade on the one hand, and governments, law, and national welfare on the other hand (Giovannucci and Ponte, 2005, Ruben, 2011, Giovannucci, 2008, Horne, 2009). While acknowledging the contributions of *institutionalist* and *political economy* perspectives to the VSS literature, we intend to approach the subject from a different angle. Specifically, we seek to draw on *governmentality* perspectives perceiving standards as "technologies for governing conduct" (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013), and which emphasize the normative dimensions of VSS as market instruments (Ponte, 2012).

Previous research in these domains suggests that VSS initiatives have been established as market-based tools that utilize the mechanisms of globalization to address and improve environmental and social issues (Potts et al., 2014, Giovannucci and Ponte, 2005, Taylor, 2005, Hatanaka, 2010b). Thus, the foundations of VSS as market-based mechanisms builds on the assumption that market actors (i.e., buyers and sellers) can pursue their social and environmental objectives in the marketplace (Taylor, 2005), and that compliance with VSS will lead to environmental benefits without the discrimination of any market actors or geographical regions (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013). However, a growing body of research from a governmentality perspective suggest that VSS serve the commercial interest of larger actors (e.g., major producers and retailers), rather than putting environmental improvements in the forefront (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013, Ponte, 2012, Belton et al., 2011). Hence, an understanding of how market actors benefit from being involved with VSS is key in order to understand how standards evolve and shape markets (Taylor, 2005).

Mainstream VSS vs. niche market VSS

Originally, VSS started off as civil society movements seeking to wield influence on conventional and often unsustainable private sector practices (Potts et al., 2014). In doing so, they sought to involve a wide range of stakeholders in order to gradually comprise all relevant sustainability aspects throughout the standard-setting process (Potts et al., 2014). The result became VSS with stringent criteria with high price premiums, aiming to target *niche* market segments (Potts et al., 2014, Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005). However, during the last twenty years, the VSS landscape has undergone a significant shift (Potts et al., 2014). Many VSS have moved away from being labels for product differentiation based on leading sustainability

practices, and instead towards marketing tools for *mainstream* supply (Potts et al., 2014, Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005). Rather than aiming to be "best in class", *mainstream* market VSS focus on a minimum of standards in the context of international trade, only trying to address a few sustainability issues (Potts et al., 2014). By reducing the ambitions, they do not have to deal with higher price premiums as niche market standards do, which allows them to target the mainstream market with "competitive prices" (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005). Furthermore, instead of involving a wide range of stakeholders in the standards development process, *mainstream* market VSS tend to launch with predetermined sustainability criteria - often developed in collaboration with private sector companies (ibid). However, this setup has been criticized. Taylor (2005) argues that it is important for VSS initiatives to keep challenging unsustainable market practices, and that collaborations with large corporate actors potentially could undermine the unique logic of VSS in favour of conventional market logics. The proliferation of VSS may increase awareness initially, but at the long-term expense of undermining consumer confidence (Lewin, 2004), thus creating a "race to the bottom" of standards (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).

VSS in the Swedish market for wild caught fish

According to Thrane et al. (2009) and Boström (2006), there are two major VSS in Sweden: Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the Association for Control of Organic Production (KRAV). Both of these focus on both the protection of fish stocks and the conservation of marine ecosystems (Thrane et al., 2009, Boström, 2006). However, MSC and KRAV differ in the amount of environmental problems they aim to mitigate (Thrane et al., 2009, Boström, 2006). MSC has been categorized as a mainstream VSS (Bush et al., 2013, Belton et al., 2011, Ponte, 2012) while KRAV can be classified as a niche market VSS considering their stringent criteria and high price premiums.

MSC is the most dominant and fastest growing VSS, both in Sweden and globally (Boström, 2006, Thrane et al., 2009, Ponte and Cheyns, 2013, Ponte, 2012). MSC was founded in 1997 by Unilever (one of the world's largest buyers of frozen wild caught fish) and the NGO World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (ibid). The MSC standard is based on three principles assessed by an MSC-accredited third-party certification body (Thrane et al., 2009, Ponte, 2012):

1. The status of the target fish stock (not contributing to overfishing of exploited populations);
2. Impact of the fishery on the ecosystem (allowing for the maintenance, structure and diversity of the ecosystem);
3. Performance of the fishery management systems (adopting a management system that respects local and national fishery laws and use resources in a responsible and sustainable manner)

Despite their contribution to make sustainable wild caught fish widely available for consumers in the global northern markets, MSC's principles have received criticism for not giving attention to other significant sustainability issues directly linked to fishing, such as energy consumption emissions and harmful antifouling agents (Thrane et al., 2009). Moreover, the MSC label fails to include labour and socio-economic conditions in its standard (Ponte, 2012). The perhaps most troublesome critique is that MSC's principles have failed to achieve documented positive impacts on the environment (Ponte, 2012, Bush et al., 2013).

KRAV is a Swedish NGO and eco-label organization, certifying a wide range of organic products in the Swedish market (Boström,

2006). In the case of wild caught fish, KRAV has been available as a VSS since 2004 (Boström, 2006). Under assessment of accredited third-party certifiers, KRAV's standard aims to include many environmental aspects relating to fisheries (Thrane et al., 2009). Thrane et al. (2009) summarizes KRAV's criteria as following:

- Avoiding overexploitation
- Reducing bycatch and discard (e.g., by selective fishing gear);
- Reducing energy consumption (e.g., demands engine/fuel type);
- Seafloor impacts (e.g., prohibits beam trawl);
- Waste handling;
- No harmful anti-fouling agents (e.g., paint);
- No harmful cleaning agents;
- Animal welfare;
- Clear environmental targets, action plans and internal environmental audits;
- Reduction of product loss internally and external demands on suppliers;
- Only recyclable packaging;
- No harmful additives

Thus, in relation to MSC, KRAV offers a comprehensive VSS that aims to mitigate a wider range of environmental issues (ibid). Yet, by enrolling large fisheries and major actors along the value chain, MSC has positioned themselves as the main reference for sustainability in the market for wild caught fish (Ponte, 2012, Belton et al., 2011, Bush et al., 2013). By having a near monopoly, MSC is an important actor that shapes production, trade and consumption practices in the market for sustainable wild caught fish (Ponte, 2012).

2.2 The shaping of sustainable fish markets

In order to get a better understanding of how VSS for wild caught fish affect the way market actors behave, we have to review the literature on how markets are shaped. According to Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006), there are a plethora of studies that offer understandings of how markets are being shaped. However, one of the most interesting research developments within this area are theories on *market practice* (defined as "*activities that contribute to constitute markets*") (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). By regarding markets as constitutions of market practice involving varying kinds of expertise and material devices, it is possible to gain an understanding of how they are shaped (Araujo, 2007, Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007b, Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, Barry and Slater, 2002, Callon, 1998).

Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) present a conceptual model that can be used to explain the practical shaping of the market for sustainable wild caught fish. This model submits a rich and beneficial characterisation of *what* shapes a particular market, and *how* that market is being shaped (ibid). As a result of this, Kjellberg and Helgessons' (2006) conceptualization has been widely adapted in the market practice literature (Esbjerg and Hansen, 2013, Korkman et al., 2010, Storbacka and Nenonen, 2010, Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011). For this paper, we will adapt parts of this model, suggesting that *market practice* in the market for sustainable wild caught fish is the result of two types of practices: *exchange practices* and *normalizing practices* (see figure 1).

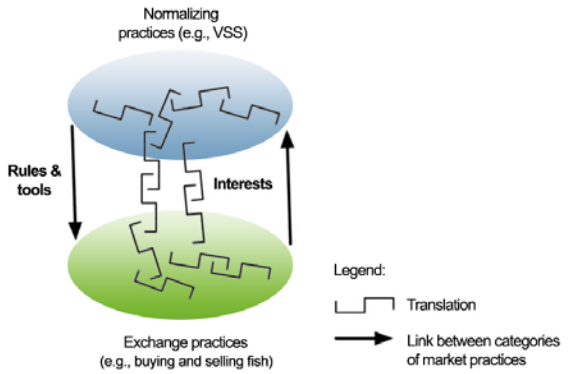

Fig 1. A conceptualization of how market practice shape markets (adapted from Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006)

Exchange practices are concrete activities related to a specific individual economic exchange, meaning that they impact how sustainable wild caught fish products are being defined and how the buyer-seller interaction in the market is arranged (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011). Hence, *exchange practices* could be seen as the processes through which wild caught fish offerings are being communicated, refined, and agreed on among market actors (e.g., fishermen, wholesales, retailers etc) - leading to financial transactions (ibid). *Normalizing practices* are activities performed by actors (e.g., VSS organizations and NGOs) that contributes to establish guidelines for how the market for wild caught fish should work according to themselves (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). In other words, *normalizing practices* aims to convince market actors to perform economic exchanges in accordance with a certain set of criteria (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011). Particularly, they strive to define (or redefine) how sustainability regarding wild caught fish should be measured (Azimont and Araujo, 2007). With regards to the categories of exchange- and normalizing practices, it should be pointed out that one actor can be engaged in both (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011). For instance, a fisherman can be involved in both selling fish (i.e., exchange practices) and in recommending other fishermen of what VSS to become certified with (i.e., normalizing practices) (ibid).

The two types of practices presented in *figure 1* should be seen as dense areas of activity that entail many individual activities, which in turn are linked by chains of *translations*. These are social processes that facilitates for ideas, products, technologies etc. to circulate across time and space (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Specifically, *translations* should be thought of as versatile interactions in which market actors 1) decide on common definitions, 2) define representatives, and 3) co-opt themselves in the pursuit of individual or collective objectives (Bardini and Horvath, 1995). Hence, by paying attention to *translations* that link *exchange*- and *normalizing practice*s together in the market for wild caught fish, we can study how "perceived differences in scale" among market actors takes part in shaping the market for wild caught fish (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006).

How VSS as normalizing practices affects exchange practices

The notion that both MSC and KRAV attempts to gain influence over the sustainable fish market in Sweden can be seen as an example of how *normalizing practices* affect *exchange practices* (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a). When two VSS compete by advocating different sustainability criteria, they will both end up enrolling groups of relevant market actors (e.g., fishermen, wholesales, retailers, NGOs etc.). If neither party is strong enough to convince the entire market that their label is the best in achieving the desired outcomes, a parallel system of norms will emerge (ibid). In the case of MSC and KRAV, this implies the creation of two parallel markets for sustainable wild caught fish (ibid). Moreover, as shown in *figure 1*, different *normalizing practices* will dictate competing market norms that subsequently

becomes translated into *rules and tools* (e.g., expertise, material devices etc.) used by market actors who subscribe to the respective VSS (ibid). For instance, fishermen subscribing to KRAV's criteria need to use a certain selection of approved fishing gear, and actors involved with both KRAV or MSC are expected to act in accordance with the different chain of custody rules which ensures transparency along the respective value chains of sustainable wild caught fish. Hence, *rules and tools* as a part of *normalizing practices* then partake in *exchange practices* (ibid). In particular, VSS dictates *what* results to measure, and *how* to measure results, and in striving to meet the desired results, market actors will try to align their business as much as possible with the VSS they subscribe to (ibid). Thus, as Hatanaka et al. (2005, cited in Belton et al., 2011) states: "*certifications reorganizes, transforms and disciplines people and things throughout the supply chain, with differential social and economic implications for various participants*".

Competing efforts to shape normative objectives

When different market actors engaged in *exchange practices* (e.g., fishermen, retailers etc.) are affected by *normalizing practices (*e.g., VSS), they are likely to respond to these by suggesting changes favourable to their particular *interests* (see *figure 1*) (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Put differently, they may try to gain influence of the *normalizing practices* by suggesting changes that will benefit themselves in some way (often commercially) (ibid). Thus, efforts to shape normalizing objectives can be expected to end up in political struggles (ibid). During these conflicts of interest, the respective sides usually try to enrol groups of relevant actors that will support their arguments (ibid). Unilever's initiative to create MSC in collaboration with WWF can be seen as such an example. By financing the creation of MSC, Unilever could ensure a future supply of wild caught fish, and at the same time avoid collaborating with existing VSS that were not favourable to their particular commercial interests (Boström, 2006). Hence, when assemblies of powerful market actors collaborate to develop certain techniques and strategies for aligning *normalizing practices* with their own particular *interests*, they have profound effects on how the market for sustainable wild caught fish is being shaped (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013).

3. Methodology

In this part, we will present the methodology we subscribe to. Specifically, we will describe and motivate our study design, describe the fieldwork, present our interviewees, and clarify how our analysis was conducted.

3.1 Methodological approach

In line with previous studies on market practice (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006, Hagberg and Kjellberg, 2010, Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011), this paper subscribes to the philosophy of *practical constructivism* that assumes social reality to be constructed and assigns equal importance to both human and non-human entities. Most definitions on markets assume that it is possible to describe their typical properties, and as a consequence, they are focused on detecting such properties (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007b). However, from a *practical constructivist* perspective, it is impossible to outline properties that are typical of markets, and that is why focus needs to be directed towards how actors perform markets in practice (Latour, 1987). Thus, a methodological consequence of *practical constructivism* is that markets need to be studied in the making (i.e., as outcomes of what actors do) (ibid).

Method

According to Yin (2009), case studies are preferable when an in-depth description of some

phenomenon is required. Schramm (1971, cited in Yin, 2009) argues that "*case studies tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result"*. Consequently, we found case studies of MSC and KRAV to be a suitable method in gaining an understanding of *how different categories of VSS affect market practices in the Swedish market for wild caught fish*. Hence, by choosing to do case studies, we could get an in-depth understanding of *why* and *how* different market actors chose to work with either MSC or/and KRAV, as well as the market *implications* of these decisions. The two cases of KRAV and MSC are chosen with regards to their respective influence over the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish - MSC is the largest mainstream market VSS and KRAV is the largest niche market VSS (Boström, 2006).

Data collection

In gathering data for this paper, we have taken several steps to ensure that the collected empirical material was as relevant as possible. First of all, in order to familiarize ourselves with the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish, we participated in a guided tour of the Gothenburg fish auction. During this tour, we were briefly introduced to several key actors in the market (e.g., fishermen, VSS representatives, retailers, producers and wholesalers). Moreover, a representative of the fish auction also gave us a detailed presentation of professional fishery and what the value chain for sustainable wild caught fish look like. In the auction hall, we were able to witness how the fish was delivered, presented to the different buyers, and also how the bidding of the fish took place. Besides visiting the fish auction, we also did extensive readings of certification documents explaining the different VSS-criteria. This allowed us to gain a better understanding of what actors that are involved in the Swedish value chain for VSS-labelled wild caught fish.

Next, after gaining a fundamental understanding of the industry, we started our sampling process by interviewing different market actors in the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish. Specifically, we interviewed, retailers, restaurants, government representatives, fishermen, TPCs, and NGOs regarding their views on MSC and KRAV, and their rationale for working with (or not working with) MSC and/or KRAV. Moreover, we also interviewed representatives from both MSC and KRAV in order to gain a better understanding of their intentions. The interview process proved fruitful since we were able to collect valuable data from multiple market actors along the value chain, hence gain a holistic understanding of the market.

In particular, we chose to conduct semi-structured interviews that allowed for in-depth responses without having to interrupt the interviewees (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2013). In total, we did 9 interviews (see "Presentation of Interviewees" for a complete list). We deliberately picked interviewees that could represent different parts of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) model of how market practice shape markets. Some of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and others were conducted by telephone. Once the interviews were completed, we transcribed them in both Swedish and English. Then, by coding the empirical data in accordance with our adapted model for how market practice shape markets, we were able to identify similarities and/or differences with previous theory, as well as interesting themes of value for our research question.

3.3 Presentation of interviewees

Due to the desire of the interviewees, and with respect of their integrity, we have replaced their real names with fictional names.

Interview 1 - Karin (WWF)

WWF can be considered an actor engaged in promoting normalizing practices in the Swedish market for wild caught fish. Karin has the position of senior conservation officer for marine and fisheries at WWF in Sweden. She has been in change of their work regarding fishery issues for more than 13 years and is by many considered an authority on the subject of sustainable fisheries in Sweden. The interview was conducted face-to-face and lasted for 1.5 hours.

Interview 2 - Lena (Swedish Board of Agriculture)

The Swedish Board of Agriculture is also an actor involved with supporting sustainable (i.e., normalizing) practices for wild caught fish. Lena works with issues regarding commerce and markets at the Swedish Board of Agriculture (Jordbruksverket). She has been working as an expert and government official on fisheries and food products for many years. The interview with Lena was carried out during an hour-long telephone-interview.

Interview 3 - Klas (KRAV)

KRAV is a significant market actor involved in normalizing practices for wild caught fish in Sweden. Klas is the chief sales manager of KRAV since three years ago, and has been employed at KRAV for almost 10 years. He is responsible for recruitment and relations with customers (operators) in KRAV's certification programme. Klas was interviewed for 1.5 hours by phone.

Interview 4 - Maria (MSC)

MSC is the other major market actor involved in normalizing practices for wild caught fish in Sweden. Maria works as commercial officer for MSC in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea region and is responsible for all issues related to marketing and commerce. She has been involved with MSC for two years. The interview was conducted by phone and lasted for 1.5 hours.

Interview 5 - Lars (TPC - third-party certifier)

Lars works as an independent third-party certifier for both KRAV and MSC. Hence, he could be seen as an expert used to apply normalizing practices to exchange practices. He has been involved with certifying fisheries since 2006 and is considered a national authority on the topic. Lars was interviewed by phone during one hour.

Interview 6 - Rickard (SFR - Swedish National Fishermen Association)

Rickard is the chairman of SFR who represents the interests of professional fishermen (i.e., exchange practitioners) in Sweden. The interview with Rickard was conducted face to face and lasted for 1.5 hours.

Interviewee 7 - Gudrun (Coop)

Coop is one of the major retailers (i.e., exchange practitioners) in Sweden that sells a lot of sustainable wild caught fish. Gudrun has been working as a sustainability strategist at Coop for a couple of years. Gudrun was interviewed by phone during an hour-long telephone interview.

Interviewee 8 - Markus (Hemköp)

Hemköp is another of Sweden's large retailers (i.e., also an exchange practitioner) that sells large quantities of sustainable wild caught fish. In his position as sales manager for fish, Markus is responsible for the fish that the Swedish retailer Hemköp offers. The interview with

Markus lasted for one hour and was carried out by phone.

Interviewee 9 - Mats (B.A.R)

Mats is the owner of the restaurant B.A.R in Stockholm, hence involved in exchange practices regarding sustainable wild caught fish. The restaurant was the first in Sweden to be MSC-certified, and is today one of the few that is yet certified. Mats was interviewed for thirty minutes during a telephone interview.

3.4 Quality discussion

While conducting the interviews, several considerations have been taken in order to ensure *trustworthiness* (i.e., the aspects of *dependability*, *transferability*, *credibility* and *confirmability)* throughout the research process (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2013). *Dependability* was ensured by several actions. To start off, an interview guide based on the logical structure of the theoretical framework was developed and sent to all interviewees in good time prior to the interviews (see appendix). All interviews were then recorded in order to make sure that we captured all relevant data. Later, the recordings were transcribed into Swedish, and subsequently translated into English.

In order to ensure *transferability*, we developed a theoretical framework based on previous literature related to our topic. Our framework mainly builds on already established structures, developed by well-cited researchers within the fields of VSS as governing market instruments (particularly Ponte and Cheyns, 2013) and market practice (most notably Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Consequently, we have adapted parts of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) model "A practice based model of market" to fit in the theoretical approach of this article. Thus, the rationale for adopting the model is that we wanted to only focus on economic exchange of goods (i.e., exchange practices) and activities that contributes to creating and shaping norms in a market (i.e., normalizing practices). Hence, representational practices were excluded since we did not consider it necessary for answering our research question. Prior to collecting our data, we made extensive research on our topic of study.

By talking to several people with insights into the Swedish fish industry (e.g., other researchers, fishermen, government officials etc.), we made sure that we got hold of knowledgeable interviewees for the actual empirical gathering. Moreover, by attending industry events beforehand (e.g., a guided tour at the Gothenburg fish auction), we made sure that we familiarized ourselves with the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish. With regards to analytic generalization of our results, we claim replication since most of the cases support given theories (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2013). At the same time, we acknowledge that our sample, consisting of nine cases represented by only one person each, may threaten proper replication. By interviewing multiple people in every case, we would have had better opportunities in sorting out subjectivity and possible misunderstandings, hence improving *credibility*.

Finally, to ensure *conformability*, we present our results in line with our adaptation of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) conceptualization of how market practice shape markets - emphasizing how different market actors partake in shaping the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish.

4. Results and analysis

In this part, we will present our findings. The results will be presented in accordance with our modified model of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) conceptualization of how market practice

shapes the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish (see figure 1). Thus, we intend to map out how our two cases - MSC and KRAV - affect both *exchange*- and *normalizing* practices in the Swedish market for Sustainable wild caught fish. Moreover, we will also describe what *rules and tools* that are used, how different *interests* are exerted, and in what ways translations are taking place. Consequently, by doing so, we will be able to illustrate how mainstream market VSS (i.e., MSC) and niche market VSS (i.e., KRAV) shape the market for wild caught fish in Sweden.

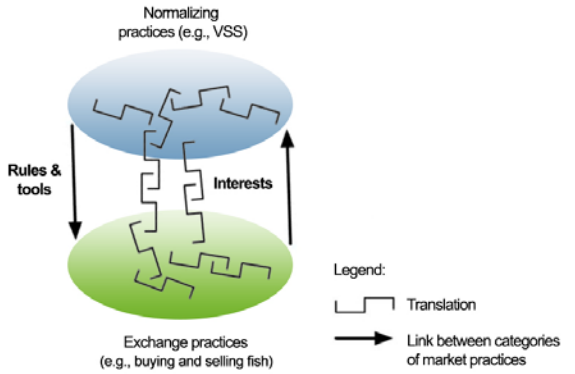

Fig 1. A conceptualization of how market practice shape the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish (adapted from Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006)

4.1 Exchange- and normalizing practices

Exchange practices refer to concrete activities among market actors involved in economic exchange of sustainable wild caught fish products in Sweden (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011). *Normalizing practices* aim to convince these actors to perform their economic exchanges in accordance with a certain set of criteria (ibid). Furthermore, the same market actors may play different roles and thus partake in both *exchange*- and *normalizing practices* (ibid). Here, we intend to illustrate how MSC and KRAV (as primarily engaged in *normalizing* practices) affect both *exchange*- and *normalizing practices* of other market actors. According to our empirical data, the most influential actors in the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish are:

- The VSS labels (KRAV and MSC);
- The fishermen;
- The wholesalers (e.g., Falkenberg Seafood);
- The producers (e.g., Orkla Foods Sweden);
- The retailers (e.g., Coop, Hemköp, ICA, Axfood);
- The restaurants;
- The NGO of WWF

The value chain

To begin with, we will present an overview of the Swedish supply chain for VSS-labelled wild caught fish. This will facilitate for the reader to later understand the specific consequences MSC and KRAV have for each market actor. According to all of our interviewees, the supply chain for VSS-labelled fish in Sweden looks like *figure 2*.

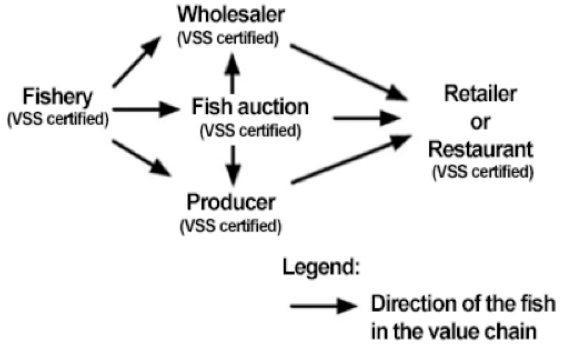

Fig 2 .The Swedish value chain for VSS-labelled wild caught fish

Figure 2 illustrates the different paths the VSS-labelled wild caught fish takes along the Swedish value chain. The value chain looks the same for both MSC and KRAV, even though they use separate certification systems. Thus, the prerequisite for taking part is that all market actors are VSS-certified and part of the Chain Of Custody (i.e., each VSS-labels' specific traceability system for the entire value chain).

The only exceptions to this rule are the retailers who can sell frozen VSS-labelled fish without being certified. However, if retailers intend to sell fresh fish, or if they want to use the VSS-label in their marketing, they will need to get certified as well.

The first step of the value chain is when the VSS-labelled fish is brought into shores by the fishermen (or when international fishermen ships their VSS-labelled catch to Sweden). From there, it either it goes directly to wholesalers and/or producers (this is usually where the imported and frozen fish ends up), or it finds it way to the fish auction. At the fish auction, wholesalers, producers, retailers and restaurants gather to place bids (usually on fresh fish from Sweden). From the fish auction, it either goes to producers or/and wholesalers who refines and re-packages it, or it goes directly to retailers and restaurants.

Before presenting how MSC and KRAV affect the other market actors in detail, we will take a closer look at the VSS-labels themselves.

MSC

MSC are mostly involved in *normalizing practices* (e.g., developing and promoting their sustainability criteria for wild caught fish).

In talking about their certification scheme, MSC consider themselves to be a VSS that primarily works to oppose over fishery. This is done in two ways: 1) by promoting their VSS to consumers and 2) by convincing different market actors to be certified. As Maria at MSC states: *"It is important to give the consumer a trustworthy choice that mitigates over fishery. Moreover, it is also important to give the market actors a strong incitement to use our label"*. Despite the notion that the MSC-label only has a consumer recognition rate of 30-40% in Sweden, it has evolved to be the most popular VSS on the Swedish market among exchange practitioners. According to Lars, TPC consultant, the reasons for this are partly due to that MSC requires relatively few criteria in order to be certified (i.e., it is the easiest VSS to be certified with, especially for the retailers), and that MSC offers a relatively large supply of sustainable fish from international fisheries. This view is also supported by Klas at KRAV who states: *"the main difference between MSC and KRAV is that MSC has the ability to put more fish on the market, and that is something that the market appreciates"*. According to Karin at WWF, 80% of the fish sold in Sweden are imported, and much of that comes from Norway. Karin continues: *"Norway is way more interested in MSC, and this is despite that they also have the possibility to label the fish with KRAV"*. Hence, it seems that much of MSC's popularity has to do with their large capacity as a global label.

When MSC is about to certify a certain product category, they first make an assessment of the fisheries (i.e, they evaluate the fish stock, the status of the ecosystem, and the fishery management in certain geographical regions). When this is done, they present their plans to the public and allow for input from different market actors. Then, MSC initiate a plan for how to secure traceability for the different paths the fish may take along the value chain. In practice, this means that different rules are developed for different market actors. In studying the different rules that apply for market actors, Lars (TPC consultant) argues that MSC is unique in that they offer the possibility for several fishing boats to share the relatively higher certification costs for MSC (which is something that is highly appreciated by the fishermen, according to Rickard at SFR). Furthermore, every market actor along the value chain that wants to sell MSC-labelled fish need to be certified in order to ensure transparency and trustworthiness. Hence, this applies for the fish auctions, the

wholesalers, the producers and the restaurants and all other parties. The only group of actors that does not need to be certified to sell MSC-labelled fish is the retailers, at least if they only sell packaged frozen MSC-certified fish. However, if retailers plan to sell fresh MSC-certified fish, or use MSC in their advertising, they will need to get certified as well.

KRAV

Like MSC, KRAV is also primarily engaged in normalizing practices that aims to ultimately change the rules governing exchange practices.

According to all of our interviewees, KRAV is considered to be a VSS with very strict criteria, addressing a holistic perspective on sustainable wild caught fish. Klas at KRAV states that their focus is to reward sustainable fisheries (hence reduce over fishery) and encourage consumers to pay a higher price premium for a sustainable wild caught fish product.

According to Lars, TPC consultant, KRAV is the most recognized VSS for wild caught fish among consumers. Over 95% of the Swedish consumers have heard of KRAV according to Lars. Yet, despite this notion, KRAV is far from the most popular VSS among exchange practitioners. According to both Lars and Klas, KRAV's stringent criteria are notably more expensive than MSC's for the wholesalers, producers and retailers. For instance, producers aiming to certify their refined fish products with KRAV need to have all of the other ingredients in their products KRAV-certified as well. This is something they do not have to do with MSC, and therefore MSC allows them to keep the costs down. Consequently, this often makes them to deselect KRAV. Since these groups of actors have a major influence over the other actors in the value chain (especially the fishermen who are keen on selling their fish), they often end up affecting the entire value chain. When asking Klas at KRAV why he believes that KRAV is not as popular as MSC among exchange practitioners, he said: *"Many of the market actors either import or export fish (especially wholesalers and producers), and MSC is then simply the most profitable choice"*.

Much like MSC, KRAV has a specific process of certifying fisheries (i.e., they investigate the fish stock, the ecosystem etc.). However, KRAV is stricter than MSC when it comes to the requirements of the market actors. For instance, all fishing boat needs an individual certification. KRAV also demands that the actors seeking certification fulfils their criteria regarding energy use, fishery gear, anti-fouling agents etc. These holistic environmental criteria are relatively more stringent for all actors along the entire value chain - all the way down to retailers and restaurants. Just like MSC, KRAV also demands all actors to be certified in order to allow for transparency and traceability along the value chain (with the exception of retailers and restaurants if they do not intend to use KRAV in their marketing).

Now, we will take a look at how MSC and KRAV affects *exchange-* and *normalizing practices* of the other market actors in detail.

Fishermen

The fishermen are, for the most part, engaged in exchange practices (e.g., managing fisheries and selling sustainable wild caught fish), but they are also sometimes engaged in normalizing practices (e.g., when they give other fishermen recommendations on what VSS to choose).

When speaking to Rickard, chairman of SFR (Swedish National Fishermen Association), about how the VSS-labels affects fisheries, he points out that the fishermen have not traditionally been interested in sustainable fisheries for the sake of the environment. Rather,

the Swedish fisheries tend to get certified based on an increasing consumer demand for sustainable fish. As Rickard states: "*I deem the claims of over fishery in Swedish waters to be exaggerated. I think the research that supports the notion of over fishery is wrong.*". He points out that fishermen, especially on the Swedish west coast, have a good understanding of fisheries and what is necessary, and this makes the notion of VSS for wild caught fish unnecessary. Nevertheless, the notion that the consumers demand more VSS-labelled fish puts Swedish fishermen in a position where they have no choice but to certify themselves. Especially consumers in Stockholm tend to put more emphasis on VSS-labels, according to Rickard. Regarding the increase in consumer demand for VSS, Rickard states: "*This is something that is out of our control. Since the consumers demand sustainable fish, we have no choice but to adjust ourselves. Otherwise we lose sales. The consumers put pressure on the retailers to sell VSS-labelled, fish. The retailers then put pressure on their suppliers, who in turn put pressure on the fishermen to offer VSS-labelled fish*". Furthermore, Rickard points out that SFR's decision to support and recommend the MSC-label to all Swedish fishermen was the most natural option. KRAV is considered to have too many rules: "*The cost to be certified at KRAV is too high, and they have rules that are not connected to fisheries. I even think that the napkins on the ships have to be eco-labelled!*". This is why only a few boats have chosen to certify themselves with KRAV. He considers it easier to work with MSC, and points out that MSC also makes it possible to export the fish abroad (implying that MSC is a global label and that KRAV is a national label).

Wholesalers and producers

Both wholesaler and producers are mostly occupied with exchange practices. Wholesalers typically purchase fish in order to package it and then sell further. Likewise retailers mostly purchase fish which they then process and refine in various ways. However, both wholesalers and retailers engage in normalizing practices when they put pressure on fishermen to deliver fish certified with a certain label.

According SFR, a large part of the VSS-labelled fish is sold to producers (e.g., Orkla Foods Sweden) and wholesalers (e.g., Falkenberg Seafood). These actors usually have trade agreements with retailers to deliver a certain amount of processed or prepared fish products each month (e.g., pickled herring, fish sticks, fish balls, caviar etc.). Retailers are very keen on having sustainable fish in supply, and as a consequence, they put pressure on producers and wholesalers to deliver large amounts that can meet consumer demand. Maria at MSC states that: "*most producers and wholesalers are very eager to comply with requests from retailers*". However, in order for the wholesaler to meet the retailers' high demand for sustainable fish, they need to import large quantities from other countries. As a consequence, they will mostly be able to deliver fish labelled with MSC (since KRAV is only available for fish caught in Sweden). For example, Orkla Foods Sweden (formerly Abba Seafood, and Sweden's largest producer of fish products) have a goal of certifying all of their fish products by 2020 with MSC, but only two or three products with KRAV (Orkla Foods Sweden website, 2015). Hence, a company in their size cannot realistically meet the consumer demand for sustainable wild caught with only KRAV-labelled products.

Retailers

Retailers are to a large extent engaged in exchange practices (e.g. purchasing and selling VSS-labelled fish). However, as one of the most influential actors when it comes to purchasing power, the retailers also put pressure on market

actors backwards in the value chain to become certified with certain VSS-labels. Therefore, they are highly involved in normalizing practices as well.

Typically, retailers offer two types of fish - fresh and frozen (whereof frozen represents the largest quantity). According to both Hemköp and Coop, their strategies regarding which VSS for wild caught fish to choose has to do with supply. Markus at Hemköp argues that MSC is the only VSS that has the capacity to deliver enough fish to satisfy their consumer demand. This statement is also supported by Gudrun at Coop who claims that MSC allows them to offer solely sustainable frozen fish (i.e., not carry conventional frozen fish at all), and this is something that KRAV is not able to do. For Hemköp, the two most important things are to make the customer happy and to strengthen their own brand. MSC offers them the opportunity to do both. Likewise, Gudrun at Coop also points out the importance of being able to offer sustainable fish to their customers as an "*additional value offering*". In talking about KRAV, Markus at Hemköp expresses critique regarding their stringent criteria: *"I consider KRAV's criteria to be too strict. For instance, it's too much when we have to pay attention to which fish that has been prepared on which cutting board, among many other things!"* (he is addressing KRAV's requirements to separate the handling of sustainable fresh fish from the conventional fresh fish in the in-store fresh fish counter). Yet, despite their choice of working mainly with MSC, both Hemköp and Coop recognizes that KRAV is the stronger brand in terms of consumer recognition, and also that they have the most comprising sustainability criteria. As Gudrun states: *"KRAV has a holistic approach on the environment and sustainability issues, and they are probably better than MSC in mitigating environmental problems. However, when it comes to fish, we mainly care about traceability, and therefore we don't consider emissions from transportation and fuel emission as important"*.

Restaurants

Restaurants are mostly involved in exchange practices (e.g., when they purchase fish and then sells it). In a similar way as the retailers, but to a lesser degree, they also put pressure on their suppliers to become certified with a certain VSS. Therefore, they are also engaged in normalizing practices.

According to Mats, owner of B.A.R in Stockholm (one of the few sustainability-certified fish restaurants in Sweden), restaurants in general have not traditionally been working with sustainable wild caught fish. In contrast to retailers, most restaurants prefer to purchase mostly fresh fish - rather than frozen or processed. Consequently, this implies that they often use different suppliers than the retailers. As Mats states: "*from the beginning, our suppliers did not offer any sustainable wild caught fish at all, so I had to put pressure on them and ask for it*". Yet, he admits that it still today can be hard to find some fish types that have a sustainability-certification. For him as a professional, it was important to offer the customers an additional value, and that was the main reason for certifying the restaurant. The decision to certify the restaurant with MSC was because of the supply. It is easier for the suppliers to find MSC-certified fresh fish, rather than KRAV.

For the next part, we will take a closer look at how normalizing practices are transferred to exchange practices in a tangible and practical way.

4.3 Rules and tools

Rules and tools connect normalizing practices with exchange practices (Kjellberg and

Helgesson, 2007b). They facilitate for exchange practitioners to understand the VSS in relation to their particular business, and instruct the exchange practitioner on how to apply the criteria (ibid). For example, rules and tools could take the form of tangible devices, professional expertise or lists of explicit standards/rules (ibid). In the case of MSC and KRAV, our empirical data show that a couple of rules and tools are used. The most important *rules and tools* regarding how both MSC and KRAV work are the *third-party certifiers (TPC's)* and *Chain of Custody (CoC).* Moreover, we have also found that *WWF's pocket-sized fish guide for consumers* plays a significant role in guiding exchange practitioners of what wild caught fish that is considered sustainable.

Third- Party Certifiers (TPC's)

The role of TPC companies are to make sure the market actors in the Swedish value chain for sustainable wild caught fish are certified correctly in an unbiased way. The reason for this is to separate the sustainable fish from the conventional. Lars (third-party certifier) states: *"there is no difference in the value chain between sustainable and unsustainable fish, the difference is whether the market actors in the value chain are certified or not"*. The benefit of TPCs according to Karin (WWF) is that *"they offer an independent and transparent certification procedure that everyone can follow and take part of*". The reason for a transparent and independent certification system is to create trust among the market actors. Klas (KRAV) adds: *"VSS serves as tools for knowledge are supposed to provide the right information to the market. The TPC's are the key for accomplishing this"*.

Chain of Custody (CoC)

The *Chain of Custody* is created by the VSS organizations to be used as a tool to measure and track the different actors along the value chain. Hence, when market actors become certified, they are included in the Chain of Custody system that is used to provide information and offer traceability towards all market actors. According to Karin (WWF) *"the big difference between sustainable fish and non-sustainable fish is the Chain of Custody. That is the traceability of the standard and it is very important since it shows who is certified and who is not certified"*. Moreover, a key function of the *Chain of Custody* is to follow up the sales of the VSS-labelled fish. Specifically, market actors are expected to declare how much sustainable fish that are bought and sold. This way, the VSS-labels can make sure that no one is cheating by selling unconventional fish as VSS-labelled fish.

WWF's fish guide

Rickard (SFR), Gudrun (COOP) and Karin (WWF) all argues that the pocket-sized fish guide provided by the NGO WWF has a significant effect on the Swedish market for wild caught sustainable fish. Many consumers use this guide when shopping, and as a consequence, it has become an important tool for the retailers to pay attention to. The fish guide is designed to look like a traffic light, with red, yellow and green colours that demonstrate how sustainable different fish species are based on the status of their respective fish stock. All fish that is labelled with either MSC or KRAV automatically receives a green light. Hence, even though the fish guide is not a tool offered by the MSC or KRAV directly, it works indirectly in their favour since WWF utilizes their strong influence over normalizing practices to promote both MSC and KRAV via the guide.

Next, we will present how market actors engaged in exchange practices attempts to gain influence over the VSS-labels.

4.4 Interests

When different market actors engaged in *exchange practices* (e.g., fishermen, retailers etc) are affected by *normalizing practices (*e.g., VSS), they are likely to respond to these by suggesting changes favourable to their particular *interests* (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). In other words, fishermen, wholesalers and retailers are prone to promote changes to VSS-labels that will benefit themselves (ibid). In the following section, we will present settings in which market actors that are engaged in exchange practices tries to influence normalizing practices. According to our empirical data, there is one main way to do this, and that is via the VSS-labels' regulatory committees. Moreover, our data also show that many market actors engaged in exchange practices put effort in trying to influence WWF's recommendations regarding wild caught fish (i.e., the fish guide that acts as a strong normalizing force).

Regulatory committees

Both MSC and KRAV have regulatory committees. The purpose of these committees is to allow for different stakeholders to have a saying in the way VSS labels work. However, there are some differences between MSC and KRAV regarding what stakeholders that are allowed to participate.

MSC has a multinational regulatory process that works as a series of "consulting rounds". Hence, every 5 years, MSC examines whether they should revise any of their sustainability criteria. This is done through consulting hundreds of researchers and different market actors regarding their thoughts on specific issues. These "consulting rounds" typically takes the form of workshops that are open to everyone interested. Before any changes can be approved, they need to pass MSC's *technical board* (consisting of 17 people) and their *board of trustees* (consisting of 14 people. These boards are partly represented by equal amounts of researchers/consultants and representatives from large MNCs (e.g., Unilever, American Seafoods, Sainsbury's PLC, Clearwater Seafoods Limited etc.). Consequently, as Maria at MSC sates: *"we are the owner of the standard and develop the MSC label together with market actors, NGOs and researchers, among others"*.

KRAV has a regulatory committee (or reference group) that are represented by 14 persons who revise the standard every 1-2 year. 11 of these are either employed by KRAV or researchers. Three companies are represented in the reference group - Abba, Axfood and Domstein. Klas (KRAV) explains how it works at KRAV: *"In our reference group we have elected officials and also and researchers within marine biology and sustainability. These take an holistic approach and evaluate all the market actors within the value chain"*. Hence, KRAV is not as open as MSC regarding involvement of any market actors (e.g., different workshops etc.).

WWF's fish guide

According to our empirical data, many non-certified market actors that are engaged in selling conventional fish (e.g., fishermen and retailers) put much effort in trying to influence the consumer fish guide offered by WWF. Even though WWF is not a VSS organization per se, they have arguably equal amounts influence over normalizing practices as what MSC and KRAV have. As Gudrun (Coop) states: *"When you work in retail, it is important to remember how much influence the NGO's have over the market. Especially WWF and their fish guide has a massive impact on the market and the way we at Coop work"*. Moreover, Rickard (SFR) claims that many fishermen have seen their sales directly changed depending on WWF's recommendations presented in their fish guide. As a consequence, a political debate has sprung up between market actors engaged in exchange

practices (e.g., fishermen and retailers) and WWF regarding what fish that should get a green- yellow or red light. Much like KRAV, WWF are not as prone to involve market actors in developing their recommendations. Rather, WWF mostly look at research for judging the sustainability status of the different fish species and their respective stocks. Furthermore, our empirical data also shows that many actors involved in buying and selling conventional fish decide to get certified with either MSC or KRAV, only to get a "green light" in WWF's fish guide.

In sum, there are ways to influence the different normalizing practices. MSC allows for more involvement in general (e.g., when they have open workshops), while KRAV and WWF are more closed to "non-elected" market actors. In the next part, we will present how ideas are translated between market actors.

4.5 Translations

Translations in the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish takes place in social interactions between different market actors (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Translations links actors engaged in exchange practices (e.g., fishermen, retailers etc.) with actors engaged in normalizing practices (e.g., VSS representatives). Moreover, translations also take place within the realm of both exchange- and normalizing practices (e.g., when representatives from MSC and KRAV meet to discuss ideas, or when fishermen meet to discuss their fish products) (ibid). This means that translations take place practically every day when market actors interact with each other. However, it is too complicated to provide a complete picture of all translations taking place in the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish. Rather, we have identified two major forums where many translations in the Swedish market for wild caught fish take place on a regular basis: the *fish auctions* and the *trade association meetings*.

Fish auctions

In Sweden there are two fish auctions, Gothenburg's fish auction and Smögen's fish auction. Both of these auctions are certified with KRAV and MSC. In our empirical data and from our personal guided tour in Gothenburg fish auction, we find that the fish auction acts as a central hub and play a very important part in connecting normalizing and exchange practices through chains of *translations*. All of the market actors (fishermen, wholesalers, producers, restaurants and retailers) have a direct relationship with the fish auction. Consequently, the VSS organizations works closely and often visit the fish auction in order to gather input from the involved market actors. Maria (MSC) told us that one of her most important work tasks is to communicate with actors engaged in exchange practices about news such as changes on the MSC ecolabel or when a new fishery and/or product has been approved. For that reason, she often visits the fish auctions to interact with many actors in person.

Trade association meetings

From our empirical data, we have identified that trade association meetings play a major role in synchronizing market actors' views on sustainable wild caught fish. There are many of these associations throughout Sweden, often dedicated to specific professional societies (e.g., fishermen, restaurants, retailers etc.). However, one of the associations that have a major influence over its members' view of sustainable wild caught fish is SFR (the Swedish National Fishermen Association). Rickard at SFR argues that the regulatory framework around Swedish fisheries is quite complicated - "*There is not only rules about different VSS, but also regarding quotas dictated by the European Union and so on"*. Therefore, fishermen often

have many interactions with SFR at different meetings where they are given recommendations. Some of these recommendations have to do with VSS for wild caught fish. For instance, Rickard (SFR) stated: *"We are very clear about only working with MSC"*. By stating this, it is implied that KRAV is nothing that SFR are going to suggest to their members.

4.6 Analytical summary

Our findings suggest that the MSC-label is the primary choice among most market actors in Sweden due to its global properties. By contrast, the KRAV-label is considered to be too limiting since it is a national label only applicable for fish caught and sold in Sweden. Hence, these findings have significant effects on *exchange*- and *normalizing* practices in the Swedish market for sustainable wild caught fish.

Most *fishermen* are indirectly forced to become certified due to pressure from the major *retailers* (e.g., Coop, Axfood and Hemköp) and *producers* (e.g., Orkla Foods) who purchase most of the fish. Consequently, most fishermen are only interested in MSC since that is what most buyers demand. The major *producers* and *wholesalers* (e.g., Falkenberg Seafood) are mostly interested in MSC since it is a global label that allows them to both import large quantities of fish (which they can sell to the *retailers)* and export their refined products to other countries. Hence, KRAV simply does not fit their business model since it is neither able to meet the demanded quantities of fish, nor is it a recognized label abroad. Consequently, the *retailers* are mostly interested in MSC since it allows them to purchase large quantities of fish from *producers* and *wholesalers*. This is necessary for meeting consumer demand - something that KRAV is not able to do.

In sum, MSC's criteria (i.e., normalizing practices) offers great economical benefits (i.e., exchange practices) to large retailers since MSC's Chain of Custody (i.e., rules and tools) allow for global trade. By partaking in discussions in the marketplace (i.e., translations), the major retailers use their major influence to put pressure on other market actors to become certified with MSC (normalizing practices). Hence, due to its global Chain of Custody (i.e., rules and tools), MSC as a mainstream market VSS has the ability to shape the Swedish market for wild caught fish in a way that KRAV as a niche market VSS cannot do.

5. Conclusion

This paper analyses market-based instruments of fishery governance that have been suggested as a solution to address and improve environmental- and social issues related to fishery (Taylor, 2005, Potts et al., 2014, Giovannucci and Ponte, 2005, Hatanaka, 2010b). The argument is that compliance with VSS will lead to environmental benefits without discriminating any actors in the market for wild caught fish (Taylor, 2005, Ponte, 2012). However, previous research has found that VSS primarily serve the commercial interest of large actors (e.g., major producers and retailers), rather than mitigating environmental problems (Ponte, 2012, Belton et al., 2011, Ponte and Cheyns, 2013). A suggested explanation for this is that the VSS landscape has moved away from being labels for product differentiation with stringent criteria, based on leading sustainability practices (i.e., niche market VSS), and towards marketing tools for mainstream supply that offer relatively low sustainability criteria to "competitive prices" (i.e., mainstream market VSS) (Potts et al., 2014, Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005). Therefore, mainstream market VSS has come to largely shape trade- and production practices throughout the market for sustainable wild

caught fish (Hatanaka et al., 2005, Ponte, 2012). However, no previous study has been able to describe the market shaping effects in practical detail (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013, Teisl et al., 2002). By using Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) conceptualization of "*how market practice shape markets*", our findings fills this research gap and contributes to a better understanding of how both niche market VSS and mainstream market VSS shape the market for sustainable wild caught fish in the global north. Specifically, by regarding the market as a constitution of *exchange*- and *normalizing practices*, involving various kinds of *rules and tools* (Araujo, 2007, Barry and Slater, 2002, Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007b, Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, Callon, 1998), we have been able to map out how the two different categories of VSS affects what market actors do in practice. As a result of this, our study has three major contributions.

Firstly, our findings support previous research suggesting that mainstream market VSS primarily serve the commercial interest of large market actors (Ponte, 2012, Belton et al., 2011, Ponte and Cheyns, 2013) and further illustrates that this has to do with the power to dictate *normalizing practices* that subsequently affects *exchange practices*. Specifically, large actors at the end of the value chain (e.g., retailers) that purchase most of the sustainable fish products in a certain market have the power to force relatively small actors earlier in the value chain (e.g.., fishermen) to align their businesses (i.e., *exchange practices*) with a certain VSS (i.e., *normalizing practice*). Thus, if the small actors do not align their businesses with the suggested VSS of the large actors, they will not be able to sell most of their fish and therefore be commercially disfavoured. Consequently, these findings supports Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) notion that market actors will support and promote *normalizing practices* that benefit themselves most. In sum, we show that when large market actors are significantly powerful, they adapt the VSS that benefit themselves most, and subsequently use their influence over *normalizing practices* to affect *exchange practices* of most other market actors. This conclusion underscores how mainstream market VSS significantly discriminate small actors in the context of wild caught fish, and that large actors reap disproportionate benefits from this type of market-based instruments of fishery governance.

Secondly, our results confirm previous findings claiming that mainstream market VSS is the largest and fastest growing category of VSS in the global northern market for sustainable wild caught fish (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013). Moreover, our findings also contribute to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. We conclude that the reason why mainstream market VSS is the largest and fastest growing category of VSS is that they offer the possibility of global trade, while the available niche market VSS are only applicable for national trade. In particular, it is the international chain of custody (i.e., the *rules and tools*) offered by mainstream VSS that makes large actors (e.g., major retailers and producers) attracted. We found that the global northern market for wild caught fish offers a limited supply of fish on a national basis, and in order to meet consumer demand, import and export of sustainable wild caught fish is of uttermost importance to large actors. Therefore, the large actors have chosen to certify themselves with mainstream market VSS, and subsequently forced the small actors (e.g., fishermen) to get certified with mainstream market VSS as well (i.e., *normalizing practices* of the large actors influence the small market actors' *exchange practices*). Hence, this notion supports Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) claim that *rules and tools*, as a part of *normalizing practices*, plays an important role for *exchange*

practices. In sum, we have shown that an international chain of custody (*i.e., rules and tools*) that allows for global trade is the reason why the mainstream market category of VSS is both the largest and the fastest growing in the global northern market for sustainable wild caught fish. The only way for niche market VSS to grow stronger, as we see it, is to open up for international certification, thus offer large international companies a realistic alternative to mainstream market VSS. A suggestion would be to start collaborating with other niche market labels or organic movements abroad.

Thirdly, this paper contributes to a better understanding of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) model "*how market practice shape markets*" in the context of VSS. To our knowledge, no research has ever studied VSS for any kinds of food products through the lens of this model. By applying this model to the context of VSS for wild caught fish, we conclude that the model is highly beneficial for illuminating how the global northern market for sustainable wild caught fish is shaped in practical detail. Yet, we have also observed that the model is somewhat limited in describing how different kinds of *normalizing practices* (i.e., global or national) influences *exchange practices* in different ways. It goes without saying that globalization and free trade play a central role for most food markets in the global north, and therefore we argue that the model would benefit from an additional dimension differentiating between *global normalizing practices* and *national normalizing practices* when looking at food markets. As Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) points out, *normalizing practices* are activities performed by some actors that contributes to establish guidelines for how the market should work. Consequently, *normalizing practices* could be performed either by actors mostly interested in global trade, or by actors mostly focusing on national trade. With regards to the importance of globalization and free trade in food markets, our results suggest that *global normalizing practices* have a stronger effect over exchange practices than *national normalizing practices* have. In other words, *global normalizing* practices are usually more lucrative to subscribe to since they open up for more business opportunities. As a result, we argue that the model should differentiate *global normalizing practices* from *national normalizing practices*, and also clarify how their discrepancies contributes to shape food markets in different ways.

Our suggestion for further research is to extend the use of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) conceptualization by looking at how *representational practices* (i.,e activities that contribute to depict markets) shape markets for sustainable wild caught fish. Specifically, we recommend to investigate how mainstream- and niche market VSS compete in shaping representations of the market for sustainable wild caught fish, and subsequently how these representations affects *exchange practices.*

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Appendix

Interview guide

The Value Chain

1. Can you explain how the fish travels through the value chain? In other words, what market actors does the fish pass through before they end up on in stores and restaurants?

2. Is there a difference between sustainable fish and non-sustainable fish in how the fish travels through the value chain?

Sustainable Fish-Labels

3. What do you consider to be the purpose of VSS-labels for wild caught fish?

4. What VSS-labels for wild caught fish are you aware of?

5. What are the similarities and differences between these different VSS-labels for wild caught fish?

6. Which of these do you think works good respectively less good in order to come to grip with the environmental problems surrounding fishing?

Buyer and Sellers In The Value Chain

7. What does the certification process for the market actors along the fish value chain look like?

8. Who sets rules/requirements for the market actors along the value chain if they wish to become certified in order to sell sustainable fish?

9. Is there a difference certification process between the different VSS-labels?

10. Do you see any market actors in the value chain that are more or less likely to become certified in order to sell sustainable fish?

11. If so, why do you think some market actors are more likely than others to become certified?

12. Do you see any sustainable labelling for fish that tend to be more popular than others among market actors in the value chain?

13. If so, why do you think that the market actors chooses to obtain certification of that particular label over other labels?

Sustainable Fish-Labels as Marketing Instruments

14. What do you think about market actors that use sustainable fish-labels in their marketing (i.e. in advertising and in packaging)?

15. Are there any particular sustainable fish-labels that are used more often in marketing than others?

16. In that case, why do you think that these labels are used more frequently in marketing than others?

Competing Sustainability Labels

17. What are the advantages or disadvantages that different sustainable fish-labels are competing with each other?